WHAT IS THE OPIUM TRADE

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As so little is known by the public generally on the subject of the trade in Opium with China, and as erroneous and exaggerated views have been put forth in the absence of correct information, it is hoped that the following plain statement of facts may not seem uncalled for at the present time.

The first inquiry which naturally suggests itself is,—What is opium-smoking, for which this extensive trade exists?

Opium-smoking, then, is not, as some suppose, similar to tobacco-smoking, where the smoke is merely taken into the mouth and forthwith puffed out again. In the case of opium, the fumes are inhaled into the lungs by a deep-drawn breath, and retained as long as possible. There they "act on the nervous fibres that are spread over the extensive membrane which lines every cell of the lung," and the effect of this process on the human system is even more injurious than that of *eating* opium. In proof of this it may be stated, that the regular smoker in China arrives at the same stage of delirium by the use of about one-third of what is required by a regular opium-eater in Turkey.* When a Chinese is about to partake of the indulgence, he retires to a private apartment, and, reclining on a couch, takes his pipe, made for the purpose, and placing upon the bowl of it a little opium, about the size of a pea, he sets it

* Dr. Smith, while at Smyrna, took pains to observe what the doses of opium taken by the Turks in general were. He found that three drachms in a day was a common quantity among the larger eaters of it, but that they could take six drachms a day without mischief.—Rees' *Encyclopædia*.

on fire at a small lamp, and then throwing himself back on the couch, inhales the smoke at short intervals in a listless mood, till he has attained the desired stimulus, or delirium, as the case may be. If he is a confirmed victim, he usually falls into a profound but restless sleep, till the effects of the indulgence have passed off. In the latter case, the craving soon returns, and with it all the languor and misery and pain, till the next period of relief.

Evidence as to the pernicious effects of this practice on the population is sufficiently abundant.* Nevertheless, being chiefly gathered from what has been witnessed in the public smoking-shops, and among the lower orders, it must be admitted that this is but one phase of the case. The writer has inspected some of these opium dens, and although more quiet prevails there than in a London gin-palace, the grovelling sensuality is greatly more painful to the visitor. On the other hand, as practised in private houses, there is not the same outrage on public decency as in the case of drunkenness. The victim quietly sleeps off his debauch. But those who would compare this with drinking wine, or ale, or even spirits, in moderation, must be unwilling to look at it in its true light. The only comparison that can be made is between opium-smoking and drunkenness; and we all know the wretchedness which that produces in our own land. Opium, however, is unquestion-

* Dr. Little states, that in 1847 there was in Singapore a population of 40,000 Chinese, male and female, of whom about 15,000 of both sexes smoked opium; the average quantity being about twenty grains' weight per day for each person, although ranging from 10 to 200 grains (the latter in rare cases) per day. In the course of his investigations he visited eighty licensed smoking-shops, and examined 603 persons who smoked opium. The rate of wages for a labourer there is about six dollars per month, or one shilling per day, and this sum is also about the average sum daily expended on opium by the Chinese in that settlement; the poorer victims in some cases expending their whole earnings. Some of these had been addicted to the vice for twenty-five years; but a much shorter period produced sickness and emaciation. He states as the result of his experience, that "the habitual use of opium not only renders the life of the man miserable, but is a powerful means of shortening that life." He adds, "I cannot suppose, after what has been written, that one individual can be found to deny the evil effects of the habit, the physical disease it produces, with the prostration of mind and the corruption of morals." See Dr. Little's pamphlet on the Habitual Use of Opium in Singapore.

ably more seductive, and more tenacious in its grasp, than spirits.

Dr. Little remarks,—"A state of excitement, or one of sedative tranquillity, is what is primarily desired by the opium-smoker, and which, at first, is effected by a small quantity of the drug. That small quantity soon loses its effect, and to produce the same amount of excitement, the dose must be doubled, and that again increased, till I have known the original quantity multiplied one hundred-fold."

The writer has known men who have smoked opium for many years without apparent injury, just as in this country we know men who consume an alarming quantity of wine or spirits apparently unscathed. Still, the Chinese, heathens as they are, unquestionably look upon the indulgence as a vice, and not as a harmless luxury. There are various ways in which the habit takes root. A friend, who is suffering from headaches, is recommended to try a whiff or two of the pipe, and finding it bring relief, he recurs to it again and again, till the habit is formed, and he is on the downward road to ruin. Others, again, take a whiff or two to stimulate the faculties for the business of the day, or to soothe the nervous irritation at the close of it. Others begin the practice, as our young men at home, by imitating the fashionable vices of their seniors. But in whatever way the habit is formed, it has a fearful tendency to grow with what it feeds upon. The truth is, the saying that a Chinese smokes the "black dirt," is the same as that among ourselves, that such a one is "fond of his glass." Whatever hopes of immunity may mingle with present appearances, we all feel that it forebodes future evil.

Of some cases which have come under the writer's observation, two may be mentioned. An opium-broker, called Bighead, gave the following testimony:—"He had been in the habit of smoking the drug for three years past. He commenced by tasting samples as a dealer, and cannot now give it up. He knows it is very bad for him—everybody knows that—but he cannot help himself. The Chinese say, when a man smokes opium, 'that he is making his own coffin.' Formerly he had been strong and muscular, now his arms and legs are thin and

weak, and his face of a black unhealthy colour. A Chinaman that smokes opium can do without rice (*i. e. meals*) for a time, and without clothes too, but not without opium; if he does not get this, he wishes himself dead."

The career of a young man, named Keet-Kwan, was watched with painful interest. He was a fine-looking man of about twenty, with a wife and family, and with a singularly intelligent, honest, and amiable countenance. He was employed by a mercantile house in China to go to Bombay to inspect the season's supply of the drug. A year passed, and he returned from Bombay. His face had a darker complexion, and he was somewhat thinner, which might have been occasioned by ordinary ill-health. He went the next year on a similar voyage, and on his return the second time he was much altered for the worse. His fine full eye was sunk, and flashed wildly,—a livid hue appeared about his lips, and his whole face was discoloured, as if he had been half-strangled. He had become a confirmed opium-smoker. I remarked to his father—"Your son smokes opium, I fear." He replied—"Ah! that is a bad business, we need not talk of that; I would give a hundred dollars for physic to cure my son, were that possible!" Two months after this interview Keet-Kwan again made his appearance, but now his eyes were lustreless, and a watery rheum was secreted from them; his features were thin, and had a look of great delicacy, and his nose sharpened; his neck had lost all the volume of muscle which it formerly showed; his body was attenuated, and he stooped considerably. Two years later I saw Keet-Kwan once more. It was now four years since he commenced the habit. He seemed to have grown twenty years older in the interval! He was quite emaciated, but retained his amiable expression. He was not a bad character. He was a quiet respectable man, engaged in business; but he was hurrying to the grave, a victim to this fatally fascinating drug.

But the injury done by this habit is not confined to the individual; it brings families to misery and ruin; it tempts to crime, and, being illegal, it leads to the demoralization of those engaged in the retail trade; and what is worst of all, it is

spreading rapidly. In proof of this, two extracts may be given from letters lately received from most trustworthy witnesses in China. The first is from the Rev. W. C. Burns, who has been more than eight years in that country, and who writes from the neighbourhood of a station for opium vessels, called Namoa, where the demoralizing influence of the traffic on the population is more seriously felt than further inland. He writes, under date July 16, 1856:—"The ravages of opium we meet with here on every hand, and the deterioration of the morals of the people generally, I cannot but ascribe, in great part, to the use of this ensnaring and destructive drug. When will measures be taken by those in power to lay an arrest on the opium traffic, which is inflicting such indescribable injury on this people, and which threatens in its progress, by its direct, and still more by its indirect effects—poverty and anarchy—to sweep away a great part of this nation from the face of the earth?"

The second extract is from the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, of Amoy, who had been little more than a year in China at the date of his letter, namely, August 21, 1856. He writes:—"Friends at home often ask me about that question (opium-smoking). I have been here too little time to say much upon it. We do see plainly that the vice is exceedingly prevalent and destructive, and that it is steadily on the increase. The nature and effects of the trade more and more seem to me to be like those of the liquor traffic at home, with the additional element of unlawfulness. We also see that about the most common objection brought against us when we go out to preach is, that our nation grows, and sends, and sells the opium. It is also worthy of remark, that so many persons are anxious to give up the use of the drug, that the manufacture and sale of pills, which somewhat assist the attempt to give it up, forms almost a self-supporting branch of our mission; the sales of the medicine for some months past averaging fifteen dollars a month, which just about covers the necessary expenses."

It should also be borne in mind by those who contend that this is only one form of pleasurable stimulus, of which every nation upon earth possesses some kind or other, that opium is not with the Chinese a national stimulant. They have had

their national stimulants of tea, wine, spirits, and tobacco, for aught we know, for the last 4000 years, whereas opium-smoking is not a century old among them, and is as yet most in use in the coast provinces.

Under these circumstances, it need not surprise us that the Chinese Government has prohibited the importation as well as the use of the drug throughout the empire, and although these prohibitions are now little more than formal, there is no reason to doubt its sincerity in the matter, as we may judge from the severe measures enacted against its own subjects in 1838, imprisonment and death being then the penalties for smoking. We have also the Emperor's steady refusal from first to last to legalize the trade, even with the prospect of a large revenue. The official reply of the Emperor Taou Kwang to such representations on the part of our Government has been often quoted:—"It is true I cannot prevent the introduction of the flowing poison; gainseeking and corrupt men will, for profit and sensuality, defeat my wishes; but nothing will induce me to derive a revenue from the vice and misery of my people." At present, however, there is comparative immunity from punishment, and this, with the cheapness of the drug, causes a rapid increase in the number of smokers. Their number is now variously estimated at from three to nine millions.*

Opium, which in Europe is one of our most valuable medicines, but which in China feeds this depraved taste, is manufactured from the juice of the white poppy; a small quantity of which is grown in Turkey and Persia, and in China itself; but it is cultivated to the greatest extent in India, both in the British dominions, and in the Independent native states. The process of cultivation and manufacture may be shortly described. The finest soil is required for the plant. The seed is sown in November. The preparation of the ground, and the subsequent weeding and watering, require much attention. The time for collecting the juice is in February and March. The poppy heads are then cut or scratched with a sharp instrument, and a milky juice exudes, which becomes

* The estimates differ according to the daily average a smoker is supposed to consume, varying from twenty to sixty grains' weight of smokeable extract.

brown in colour and thick in consistency by exposure to the sun and air, and is carefully collected by the farmer and his family. This is the crude opium. In Bengal this is delivered by the small farmer to the agent of the East India Company. It is then prepared under the inspection of these agents for the China market. The principal districts in which the poppy is grown are Patna, Benares, Behar, and Malwa, from which the different kinds of drug derive their names. In Bengal it is grown exclusively for the Government, under severe penalties for any infraction of the laws. It is understood also to be a forced production, which could not be entered upon with profit to the farmers, but for advances in money made by the Government. This point is disputed; but the poppy has undoubtedly occupied some of the finest land formerly used for indigo, sugar, and other produce.

The opium is prepared by the Government agents for the China market, by rolling it into large balls covered with a coating of opium-paste and poppy leaves, so as to exclude the air; it is then packed in chests—forty balls to a chest, and transferred to the Government warehouses at Calcutta, where the drug is put up to auction at the Government sales, of which there are four each season, at intervals of a month, commencing with December or January. At these sales the drug sells at prices varying from 700 to 1600 rupees a chest, containing 116 lbs. weight, and yielding a profit to the Government of from £40 to £120 per chest. Their total revenue from this source, including a transit duty on the Malwa exported from Bombay, is estimated at five millions sterling for the year 1857. Malwa opium is that grown in the Independent native States. It must all pass through Bombay, where, in order to keep down its production, it is charged with a duty of 400 rupees (£40) per chest.

The merchants in India purchase the opium either on their own account or for mercantile houses in China or elsewhere, and it is then shipped in fast-sailing vessels capable of carrying from 500 to 1000 chests. Of late years the monthly steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried cargoes of the drug to China.

The quantity thus imported into China from both sides of India now exceeds 70,000 chests, roughly estimated at £7,000,000 sterling. A portion also goes to Singapore for consumption throughout the islands of the eastern Archipelago.

On arrival in China, say at Hong Kong, the opium is usually transferred to large receiving ships stationary in the harbour, the storing of opium on the island being prohibited by our Government.* From these receiving ships, supplies are forwarded in small schooners and other fast sailing craft to different points on the coast according to the demand.

At these coast stations there is no other trade carried on but that in opium. The drug is transferred from the small schooners to ships permanently anchored there, and the local Chinese Government makes no attempt whatever to interfere, as it is enriched by the bribes or fees of the native dealers. These dealers come off in boats to purchase the opium, bringing silver in payment; but if the station be the outer anchorage of one of the free ports, such as Shanghae, Fuh-Chow, Amoy, or Canton, the sale is usually made on shore, in exchange for silver or Chinese produce, and an order given on the ship for delivery of the quantity sold.

The opium being thus conveyed into the country by the native dealers, it undergoes a process of boiling down to fit it for smoking. This reduces the weight one-half, so that one chest of the drug yields only half a chest of smokeable matter. It is then retailed at smoking-shops, or purchased by the wealthier classes for use at home. The laws against smoking are now so completely in abeyance, that the smoking shops in the free ports are almost as numerous as our own public-houses. Although this freedom from legal restraint exists, there is no question that the moral feeling of the Chinese Government and people is against the indulgence, and it is this which contributes in some measure to keep down the consumption.

Let us now trace as shortly as possible the course of this trade. Before the year 1800, only a small *legal* trade in opium was carried on with China, but in that year the drug was made *contraband* by the Chinese Government. This was done in consequence of a memorial from a leading statesman, who

* Since the above was printed, this statement has been found incorrect. For some years past the prohibition has been removed, and Opium is now stored largely on the island of Hong Kong.

makes it "a subject of deep regret that the vile dirt of foreign countries should be received in exchange for the commodities and the money of the Empire, and fearing lest the practice of smoking opium should spread among all the people of the inner land to the waste of their time and destruction of their property," he requests that "the sale of the drug should be prohibited, and that offenders should be made amenable to punishment." In spite of this the annual importations rose gradually from 2000 chests in 1800 to 5000 in 1820. Till 1820 opium had been mixed up with the legal merchandise at the port of Canton, but in that year the authorities again became alarmed at the extent of the traffic, and obliged the merchants to give security that no opium was on board before the ship could discharge her cargo at Whampoa; this led to the storing of it in receiving ships at Lintin at the mouth of the Canton river, and this system continued till the year 1834, when the importations exceeded 20,000 chests. During the period from 1820 to 1834 occasional collisions took place between the native smugglers and the Chinese authorities, arising out of disputes as to the amount of fees, but none occurred between that Government and the British receiving ships. In continuing this narrative, we quote from Williams' "Middle Kingdom":—"Towards the close of the East India Company's charter, in 1834, the contraband trade in opium, off the Bogue and along the coast eastward, had assumed a regular character. The fees paid for connivance at Canton were understood, and the highest persons in the province were not ashamed to participate in the profits of the trade. The attempts to sell it along the eastern coast had been mostly successful, and almost nothing else could be sold. . . . The increasing demand at Namoa and Chinchew (on the coast) led to the frequent despatch of small vessels, one taking the place of another, and finally to stationing receiving ships there, to afford a constant supply. The local authorities, finding their paper edicts quite powerless to drive them away, followed the practice of their fellow-officers at Canton, and winked at the trade for a consideration. It is not, however, right to say that the venality and weakness of these officers invalidated the authenticity of the commands they received from

Court; however flagitious their conduct in rendering the orders of none effect, it did not prove the insincerity of the Emperor and his ministers in issuing them. By the year 1834 the efforts of the local authorities to suppress the trade, resulted in a periodical issue of vain prohibitions and empty threats of punishment, which did not more plainly exhibit their own weakness in the eyes of the people, than the strength of the appetite in the smokers."

The opium vessels are all well armed, but chiefly as a precaution against pirates, which swarm on that coast. Although there has been more than one serious tragedy in conflict with pirates, there does not appear to have been any actual encounter between the opium vessels and the authorities.

During the years 1837 and 1838 attempts were made by some British merchants to smuggle the drug into the port of Canton, which led to serious collisions and disturbances on the river. Captain Elliot, H. M. Superintendent of Trade, took measures, along with the Chinese authorities, to put a stop to these highly irregular proceedings on the part of a few, and these measures proved effectual. But meanwhile the Imperial Court at Pekin was organizing plans of a much more extensive kind to annihilate the whole trade, and to stop the smoking of the drug. A Chinese statesman of the name of Heu Naetse sent up a memorial to the Emperor, praying that opium might be legalized, as the best method of dealing with an unavoidable evil. Two other statesmen, Choo Tsun and Heu Kew memorialized the Emperor in favour of an opposite course, requesting that the existing laws should be put in force with the utmost rigour. The prohibitory counsels prevailed with the Emperor, and although these measures utterly failed, it has been well said by a writer in the *North British Review*:—"No man of any humanity can read without a deep and very painful feeling what has been reported of the grief, the dismay, the indignation of men in authority, and the Emperor, on finding that their utmost efforts to save their people were defeated by the craft and the superior maritime force of the European dealers, and by the venality of their own official persons, on the coast." To proceed, the prisons were soon crowded with victims, and death by

strangling was inflicted in several instances on smokers and native dealers. An Imperial Commissioner, Lin, was sent to Canton to proceed against the foreign merchants. On his arrival there, in March 1839, he immediately put the merchants under arrest, compelled them, through H. M. Superintendent of Trade, to deliver up the whole of the opium then on the coast, amounting to 20,283 chests, and formally destroyed it by mixing it with lime and salt, and casting it into the sea. For some months after this, opium was almost unsaleable, and the prohibitory measures against smoking it were so effectual, that the consumption fell to less than a tenth of what it had been.

The war which ensued, although it arose out of the seizure of the opium as the immediate cause, really sprung from one more deep-seated and more remote in point of time. This was "the arrogant assumption of supremacy over the monarchs and people of other countries claimed by the Emperor of China for himself and for his subjects, and our long acquiescence in this state of things." The war thus commenced in 1840, and concluded in August 1842, however, decided not only the superiority of the British arms, but convinced the Imperial Court that further attempts to put down the opium trade were vain. Thenceforward the laws against smoking became more and more lax, whilst the trade, nominally contraband, went on with fewer restrictions than before. At the present time, the trade has assumed all the importance of an established recognised traffic, and the merchants engaged in it, including nearly the whole foreign community in China engaged in commerce, shelter themselves under the plea of the sanction given to it by the British Government, and the alleged insincerity of the Chinese in desiring to prohibit it. In China itself, also, the growth of the poppy has been extending with the connivance of the local authorities. The quantity thus grown is not positively known, but it was stated on good authority to be not less than 10,000 chests, so far back as 1847. It is inferior to the Indian drug, and, being much cheaper, is used for mixing with it.

Having thus traced the progress of this traffic to the present time, we proceed to inquire what have been its effects on legal

commerce, on our friendly relations with China, and on the progress of the Gospel in that empire, that we may thus arrive at the true character of the trade itself, and of the Indian revenue derived from it.

And first, as to its effects on LEGAL COMMERCE. To the candid reader it must appear quite evident that these effects are highly injurious, and that the consumption of opium materially curtails the means of the Chinese population for purchasing British manufactures. In our own country, for instance, a drunken family cannot afford to purchase more than the scantiest supply of clothing, and we are warranted in saying the same of the opium-smoker's family. But what is true of the individual is true of the whole class, and hence we lose them as customers for our manufactures, and to an extent even greater than the value of the opium. For supposing the seven millions' sterling worth of opium thrown into the sea, instead of passing through their lungs as smoke, the loss would only affect their pockets; but the actual consumption not only sweeps away the seven millions sterling, but incapacitates the victims for productive and prosperous labour. The wealth thus destroyed, with which they might purchase British manufactures, cannot, of course, be estimated, but must be considerable.

It has been objected to this, however, that the purchase of a hat by a man does not necessarily impoverish him so much as to prevent his buying also a pair of shoes, or any other article of clothing, and therefore the purchase of opium does not incapacitate the Chinese from buying long cloths. Unfortunately the hat and the opium are not parallel cases. In the purchase of the hat, its value is more than returned in comfort, preservation of health and industrial power, by which he may obtain more means to buy a pair of shoes; whereas, in the purchase of opium, instead of any value being returned, he loses his money, and, in the u e of the drug, he loses his comfort, his health, and his industrial power to produce that with which he may buy clothing. This is one of the simplest truths of political economy, and need not be pursued further. The writer in the *North British Review* has put this in a very plain form when he says,—" These facts leave us no room to doubt that the

opium-chest, landed upon the whole line of continental China, and rapidly making its way inland upon the rivers and canals, is not merely draining the country of its means as a customer for our goods, but is actually destroying our customer himself by thousands or by millions; or it is bringing him down from a condition which is improvable, to a condition of desperate and irrecoverable wretchedness."

"If the British commercial policy were to be thought of as a *whole*,—as a devised scheme of national enterprise, what we are doing, described in its naked reality, is just this, we are drugging to the death the man whom we are hoping to see enter our shop daily, purse in hand."

But it is again objected,—supposing it possible to annihilate the opium trade, What will you put in its stead to pay for Chinese produce? It may be replied: recover a drunken family from habits of intemperance, and then let us picture the numberless articles of food, furniture, and clothing that would be introduced into the once empty home, for the benefit of the family and of those with whom they deal. And then multiply this unit by all the victimized families in China, and we arrive at some conception of the enormous powers of healthy consumption that would be created by the annihilation of the opium traffic. Free access to the empire would then be more readily acceded to us, and China, with her magnificent rivers and canals and enterprising population, would soon exhibit a development of wealth, with the aid of steam-power and machinery provided by ourselves, that would enable her to take from us in British goods the equivalent of her own tea and silk.

We would here refer, in a single paragraph, to the difficulties connected with the "leaking out" of the Sycee silver. This was, no doubt, a strong objection to the opium trade on the part of the Chinese Government; for many years there was an annual export of silver from China to pay for opium, averaging £2,000,000 sterling. This drain of silver seriously embarrassed the internal commerce and revenues of a country destitute of a silver coinage of its own, and possessing no paper currency. The very continuance of this evil, however, has at length

worked out its own cure, although at the cost of much inconvenience to China. When China had no more silver to export, Chinese produce began to be taken in barter for opium, and by the year 1852, not only had the "leaking out" of the Sycee entirely ceased, but the current had set in in the opposite direction, and it is now our turn to feel the inconvenience of a drain of the precious metals. As, however, this source of anxiety to the Imperial Government of China has now ceased, it need not be further discussed here.

If we now consider the effects of this trade on the progress of CHRISTIANITY in China, and on our FRIENDLY RELATIONS with that empire, the consequences appear infinitely more disastrous. The opium scourge has proved one of the greatest obstacles to the reception of Christianity by the Chinese, and it is remarkable that it rose simultaneously with modern Christian missions, at the commencement of the present century, as if the Archfiend were vigorously counterplotting the army of the Prince of Peace. At a later period, there was a striking illustration of this at the port of Fuh-Chow, where, for some years after it was opened, no legal trade of any kind existed, and the only foreign influence at work (if we except the consular officers), consisted of a considerable band of Christian missionaries, and—the contraband opium trade! The interests of Christianity and of the opium trade were thus in open conflict on the same field, and in strong contrast, as influences for good and for evil on the population. But so far as the Chinese were able to discern, it was but one party—British Christians—presenting the Bible with the one hand, and opium to enslave them with the other. In proof of this, we may simply state what has been repeated in almost every missionary publication referring to China, that the constant reply of the poor heathen to the missionary is: Why do you bring us opium?

In regard to friendly relations with this empire, both government and people look upon us with an unfavourable eye; and although we do not lay the whole of this on the opium trade, it is impossible to remove the impression while that trade continues; nor need we wonder at their jealous prohibition of free access into their country for the same reason. "They

must still be left to look at missionary stations, and at Bibles, as seen over that mountain of opium-chests which is set down furtively every year upon their coasts; 'black dirt,' they call it, and the fumes of this blackness darken all the objects that are seen through it."*

As to the measure of responsibility resting on the different parties implicated in this trade, it should, we think, be distributed according to their power of removing the evil, and unquestionably no small share of this rests on the British public. The Chinese Government are morally and physically helpless,—the Chinese people are equally so for throwing off this fatal habit, which has fastened on the very vitals of the nation, and under which they groan, destitute of the moral and Christian energy that might break its thraldom. The position of the British merchant, as will presently be shown, is a difficult one also, and, at all events, the remedy is beyond the control of individuals of which a commercial community is composed. But the British public have the power, through their Parliament, and taking a large view of the subject, and acting on the broad principles of humanity and justice, of using their influence with the East India Company, that the cultivation of the poppy for the Chinese market may cease, for the plain reason that it is sent there to supply a vicious and illegal demand. The revenue derived from spirituous liquors in Britain has been adduced as a parallel to the Indian opium revenue; and because the former is a good one, therefore the latter is also. But the parallel is not complete. The revenue from spirits is the very best that could be raised, because it enriches the Government while it restrains the use of a dangerous article, by enhancing its cost. The revenue from opium is obtained by the Government first producing this destructive article, and then promoting its consumption in spite of the prohibitions and remonstrances of a weak and heathen nation, whose moral feelings are, nevertheless, outraged by our act.

It has been said that the position of the British merchants in these transactions is a difficult one. In justice to these parties, it must be stated that they are not, as many suppose, a set of

* "North British Review," No. lii. p. 544.

lawless buccaneers, but as respectable a class of merchants as can be found in any part of the world, and their share of the trade is conducted with regularity and business propriety. To explain this apparent anomaly, it must be borne in mind that practically the trade has become almost legalized. It enjoys the dignity and importance of an established recognised traffic. Indeed a merchant can hardly be engaged in trade in China at all without being more or less mixed up with it. The very steamer of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, by which he goes to China, carries a cargo of the drug. If a ship is consigned to his care, there is probably opium in it for himself on freight or for sale. If he is to have any command of money, or to compete with his neighbours in that market on anything like fair terms, he must deal in opium; and should he be so scrupulous as to decline such a connexion, he may as well leave China. Now, this is a distressing state of matters to a conscientious man, and yet he is often driven to acquiesce in it, rather than leave a position which he has occupied at considerable trouble and cost. Then, in addition to the force of custom "which familiarizes men's minds with systems where the greatest abuses prevail," the merchants shield themselves under the plea that the trade is not only countenanced by their own Government, but forms one chief item of revenue to our Indian empire. It may be added, that if we depart from the high standard of Christian principle in judging of the traffic, the question easily admits of being argued. Descending for a moment from the Christian point of view, the merchant argues that opium is only poison to those who abuse it; that the British merchant does not smuggle it into China, but merely brings it to its shores, to be purchased by the natives under the very eye of their own Government, with little more than a show of objection; and further, that the merchant is a mere agent between supply and demand; and that when these two elements of industry are brought to bear upon one another in any given field of commerce, their consequences concern him no further than the extent to which he can benefit himself by the interchange of the commodities. But neither a Christian merchant nor a Christian nation can rest satisfied with such views. And to those taking a manage-

ment of, or having an interest in the trade, and who believe in the Christian religion, it is submitted for their serious consideration whether, in view of the foregoing statements, they do not feel themselves called upon to cease from a course of action which is plainly opposed to the spread of Christianity in China. Let them consider whether any inducement, however lucrative, would lead them to incur the solemn responsibility of attempting to introduce this insidious scourge of opium-smoking into a new and untried field like Japan (with which commercial relations may be established at no distant date); for if it would not, a grave responsibility rests upon them for participating in an old-established evil in China, where its true character is ascertained. In short, every Christian who will examine the matter, will find that the opium trade with China cannot for one moment be defended on Christian principles; and that by applying such a test, it is at once disclosed to view as an evil which is devastating the East, and of which he, if he is engaged in it, should wash his hands at all hazards.

In appealing to the British public to do their duty in applying a remedy, we would place foremost the grand instrumentality of Christian missions as going directly to the root of the evil. The success that has of late years attended missions in China has been so remarkable as to be of itself sufficient to stimulate British Christians to increased efforts in that direction. The entrance of the truth into the heart has been found to clear away the habit of opium-smoking as light dispels darkness. The medical missionary has also done, and may yet do, important service in supplying the Chinese with medicinal means for curing the habit. Let these aids be multiplied. The field is all but a boundless one. Such efforts cannot fail in time to commend themselves to the Government and people of China, and encourage them to persevere in discountenancing the use of the drug.

But to give efficiency to such measures on our part, and to remove suspicions, it is absolutely necessary to show our sincerity by removing, as far as in our power, the temptation itself. The Bengal monopoly was originally established under Lord Cornwallis, "as the best means of raising a revenue without

aggravating the enormous evils contemplated," and "to obtain the largest amount of revenue from the smallest possible amount of consumption." Again, on the opening of the China trade in 1834, the Indian Government expressly stated that they retained the opium monopoly, not so much with a view to revenue, as to restrain the use of this pernicious drug. But they appear to have long since abandoned that humane policy, as we may judge from the fact, that in 1848, when information reached Calcutta that opium cultivation was extending in China, inquiries were made of the British authorities in China as to the truth of the statement; and, with the view of driving the Chinese drug out of the market, the supply from Bengal was largely increased, and has been increasing ever since. But this policy may not always be practicable. China may be induced to grow all that is needed for her own consumption. She is believed to be quite capable of doing so. Or, should the present revolutionists in China succeed, they are determined opponents of opium-smoking, and although we have no faith in physical force to cure such habits, who dare say, that a combination of religious and legal restraints, acting on the awakened conscience of the nation, may not, to a large extent, accomplish the object. Without any such measures, the use of opium in Turkey, once so prevalent, is now almost extinct. The revenue is, therefore, at best a precarious one. To those who can only see the ruin of our Indian empire in the loss of that revenue, we recommend the perusal of an able article in the *North British Review* for this month, (February 1857.) The writer shows that there is an elasticity in the resources of India which might with ease more than recover any such loss in a few years. Moreover, no sudden measure is desirable. The following remedy is merely suggested.

It is a fact well known to all connected with the trade, that the consumption of opium is affected very much by its cost. Whenever the price rises, consumption is checked; and when the price falls to a low figure in any given season, the consumption is large. Applying this principle to the production of opium in India, let the 70,000 chests now exported be annually reduced by 5000 or 10,000 chests, and the East India Company

may count on realizing nearly as large a revenue from the sale of the reduced quantity from year to year as it does now, and meanwhile it may be providing for its ultimate loss by developing its resources in some other direction. Let American cotton, for instance, be more largely cultivated, encouraging this by means of advances transferred from the poppy culture. On the other hand, the higher price of opium in China will check consumption, and annually reduce the number of smokers, till it becomes confined to the select few who can afford it. Opium can be supplied by no other nation in any quantity for a long time to come.

We conclude this paper with an extract from the writer in the *North British Review*, already referred to:—" But it is said if the opium manufacture were abandoned, or were only restricted in India, a stimulus would be given to the culture elsewhere; the people of China *will* destroy themselves in this way, and the Indian Government may as well profit by their infatuation. This is the old plea for all kinds of abominations. It is, or it was, the argument of the slave trader; it is the plea of those who live and fatten upon detestable practices; it is the plea of all who live by the crimes and vices of others; it is the pretext of the receiver of stolen goods; it is, and ever has been the legend upon the rogue's escutcheon all the world over,—' I don't *make* the wickedness—I only live by it.' It would be a great wrong to suppose that such a doctrine should be taken up and used either in Leadenhall Street or the Government House, Calcutta.

" The time is passed, or it is passing away, in which courses of conduct on the part of governments or corporations, which the individual man would abhor, may be palliated, connived at, and left to weigh upon the soul of the automaton, whose business it is to sign official documents. That which is false and wrong, and cruel and ruinous to the weak and the ignorant, is coming to be scouted as a mistake in political economy, as well as a crime.

" The opium traffic of the East India Company with China has come down to us along with many other evil things and great mistakes, from times when atrocities and political errors

hugged each other complacently, and were seldom called to give an account of themselves. But the opium traffic, along with other mischievous usages, must now be prepared to show cause why it should not be condemned, not only as a source and the direct cause of incalculable miseries, but as an enormous error in international polity."

To this admirable extract we can but add the Scripture testimony and appeal,—"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"—Matt. xviii. 7.

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